

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 12316 011513Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----020664 020404Z /17
R 010935Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5778
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12316

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, TECH, IN
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON NUCLEAR POLICY

1. IN A MEETING WITH ME YESTERDAY, MINISTER VAJPAYEE MADE A NUMBER OF NOTEWORTHY POINTS IN THE NUCLEAR AREA. (A) HE BELIEVES THAT THE CONGRESS PARTY HAS LAUNCHED A DELIBERATE CAMPAIGN TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT AND COMPLICATE ITS DEALINGS WITH US IN THIS AREA. AS EXAMPLES, HE CITED LAST WEEK'S SAMACHAR STORY WHICH TENDED TO TWIST THE NATURE OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS, THE CRITICAL EDITORIAL IN THE TIMES OF INDIA AUGUST 26, AND AN INTERVIEW WITH A TURIN STUDENT NEWSPAPER IN WHICH MRS. GANDHI WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE JANATA GOVERNMENT HAD SURRENDERED INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN REGARD TO NUCLEAR MATTERS. (B) HE HOPED THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDERSTAND THE GREAT POLITICAL PRESSURES HIS GOVERNMENT IS FACING ON THESE ISSUES, AND SAID BOTH SIDES SHOULD AVOID HURRY IN REACHING A FINAL DECISION ON INDIA'S ACCEPTANCE OF EXTERNAL INSPECTION OF ITS INDIGENOUS FACILITIES. (C) WHEN I SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS INDIA COULD COME TO RECOGNIZE THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS AS PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL REGIMEN IN WHICH IT ITSELF HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE AND VOICE, HIS REPLY SEEMED TO SUGGEST HE TOO HAD THIS IN MIND. HOWEVER I CANNOT RECREATE HIS EXACT WORDS AND MAY HAVE INFERRED TOO MUCH.
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(D) HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE SERIOUSNESS AND CANDOR OF THE FIRST ROUND OF TALKS (NYE'S AUGUST 1-3 VISIT) AND AGAIN MADE THE POINT THAT THE PACE OF DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BE DELIBERATE, NOT RUSHED.

2. IN CONNECTION WITH ITEM 1(A) ABOVE, VAJPAYEE SAID THAT KAMATH OF THE TIMES OF INDIA HAD FILED A STORY SAYING THAT

HE WOULD NOT BE VISITING WASHINGTON BECAUSE HE WAS NOT WELCOME THERE. HE SAID THE TIMES HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THIS WAS NONSENSE AND DID NOT DESERVE TO BE PRINTED. (A SOMEWHAT SANITIZED VERSION OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE THIS STORY APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF TODAY'S TIMES WITHOUT THIS ASSERTION OR KAMATH'S BYLINE BUT UNDER THE HEADLINE, "INDIA'S WOOING OF THE U.S. YET TO BE RECIPROCATED".)

3. THE FOREIGN MINISTER VERY MUCH HOPES TO BE ABLE TO MEET WITH SECRETARY VANCE IN NEW YORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE UNGA. HE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT VISITING WASHINGTON ON THIS TRIP ONLY BECAUSE HE EXPECTED TO BE ACCOMPANYING THE PRIME MINISTER THERE LATER IN OCTOBER.

4. IN A SEPARATE MEETING WITH OUR DCM THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT IN HIS JUDGMENT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE PM AND PRESIDENT CARTER BE ABLE TO MEET IN OCTOBER TO DISCUSS THE NUCLEAR ISSUE AND THAT THE MEETING NOT HAVE TO BE POSTPONED INTO THE SPRING BECAUSE OF MARARJI'S AVERSION TO COLD WEATHER.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, NUCLEAR ENERGY, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NEWDE12316
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770317-1151
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197709108/aaaadmwa.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 67b3113a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1085743
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTER ON NUCLEAR POLICY
TAGS: MNUC, TECH, IN, CONGRESS PARTY, (VAJPAYEE, ATAL BHARI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/67b3113a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009